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ABSTRACT

Based on an annual survey, this special factsheet provides answers to frequently asked questions about hearing impaired children and youth. Information includes incidence; makeup of the hearing impaired population by sex, age and ethnic background; time of onset of loss; degree of hearing loss; leading cause of hearing loss; percentages of hearing impaired students participating in special and regular education and in sign language instruction; amount of use of sign language by families; effects of degree of loss on speech intelligibility; effect on academic performance; trends in enrollment patterns in public residential schools; and numbers of colleges offering special programs for hearing impaired students. In addition to the question and answer format, the paper includes numerous graphs. (CL)

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Today's Hearing Impaired Children and Youth: A Demographic and Academic Profile

The Gallaudet Research Institute has compiled the following answers to some frequently asked questions about hearing impaired young people. These answers came largely from the GRI's 1982-83 Annual Survey of Hearing Impaired Children and Youth.

Q. *How many hearing impaired students are there in the United States and where are they?*

A. The best estimate is 76,000 to 90,000 students, of which the Annual Survey has data on 55,000. The geographic distribution of these students is similar to that of the general 5- to 17-year-old population.

Q. *What percent are male, and what percent are female?*

A. Males make up 54%, females 46%.

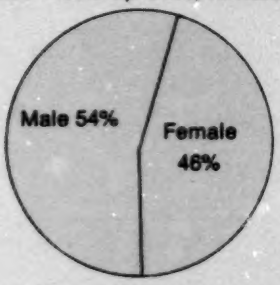

Figure 1. **Distribution by Sex**

Q. *What is the ethnic background of hearing impaired students?*

A. Whites make up 68%, blacks 18%, Hispanics 10%, and other ethnic groups 4%.

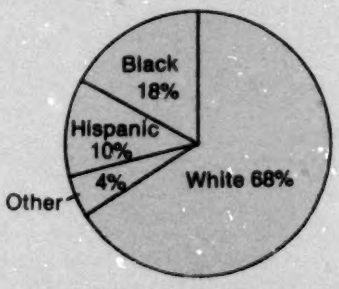

Figure 2. **Distribution by Ethnic Group**

Q. *When was the onset of these students' hearing losses?*

A. For 94%, the onset was before the age of three.

Q. *What is the degree of hearing loss for these students?*

A. Profoundly deaf students (more than 90 dB loss in better ear) make up 44%, severely deaf (between 71 and 90 dB loss) make up 21%, and less than severely deaf (less than 71 dB loss) make up 34%.

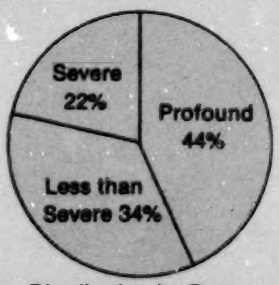

Figure 3. **Distribution by Degree of Loss**

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Q. *What are the leading causes of hearing loss?*

A. The numbers and percentages of students according to reported cause of deafness are shown in Figure 4. Nearly 40% of the students are deaf for unknown reasons. Maternal rubella and heredity are the most frequently reported known causes.

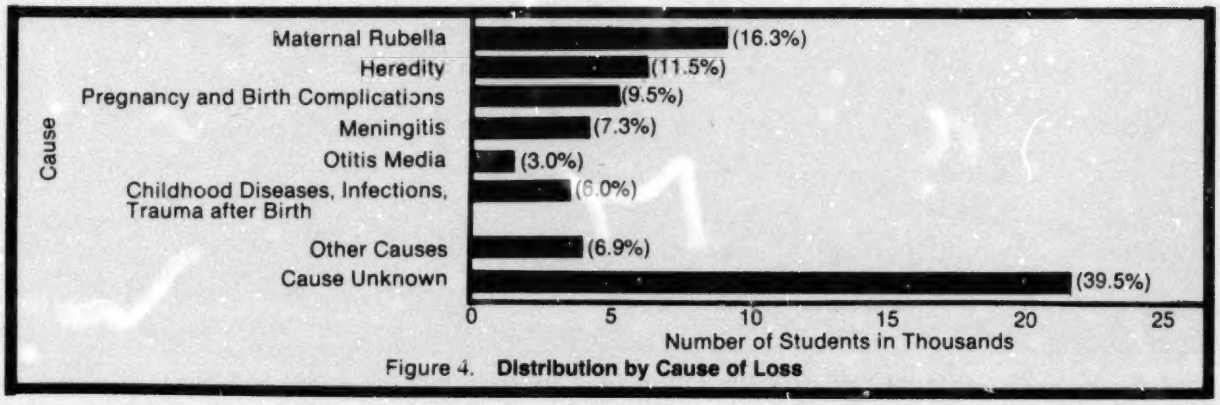

Figure 4. **Distribution by Cause of Loss**

Q. *How many hearing impaired students are there at various ages?*

A. Distribution by age, as of December 31, 1982, is shown in Figure 5. The "bulge" at ages 17 and 18 is a result of the 1964-65 maternal rubella epidemic.

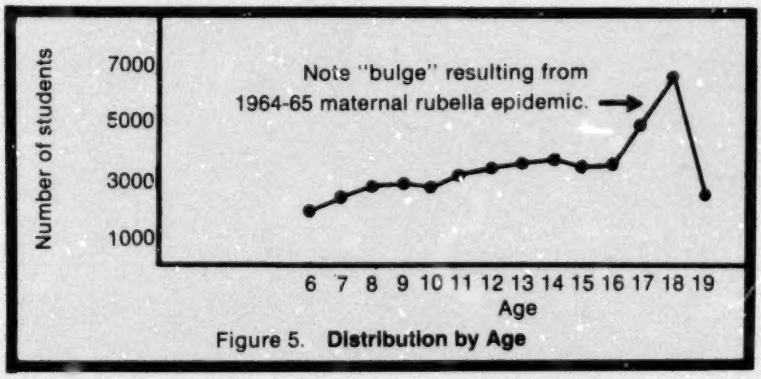

Figure 5. **Distribution by Age**

Q. *How are these students being educated?*

A. Half are receiving special education only, 42.3% are receiving a mixture of special education and regular education, and 6.1% are receiving regular education only.

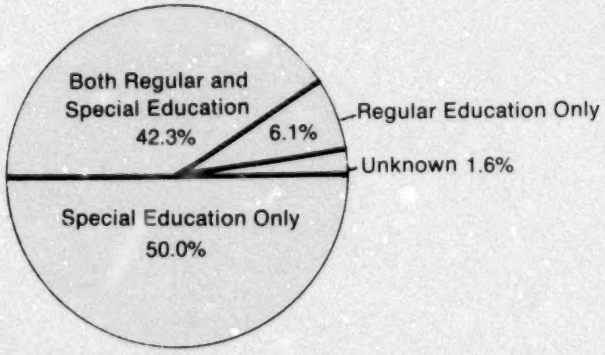

Figure 6. **Distribution by Type of Education**

Q. *What proportion of hearing impaired students are being taught in sign language by their instructional program?*

A. Schools and programs reportedly use sign language in their instruction with 87.2% of their profoundly deaf students, 75.1% of their severely deaf students, and 29.9% of the students whose losses are less than severe.

Q. *Do families of hearing impaired students use sign language?*

A. Families of 56.2% of the profoundly deaf students reportedly use sign language; the percentage drops to 36.0% for the severely deaf students and to 9.9% for students with less than severe losses.

Q. *How does the speech intelligibility of these students relate to their degree of hearing loss?*

A. Students with less than severe losses are rated in 52.7% of reported cases as having "very intelligible" speech; the percentage drops to 21.7% for severely deaf students and to 4.7% for those who are profoundly deaf. Only 4.7% of students with less than severe losses are reported as having "not intelligible" speech; the percentage rises to 13.8% for severely deaf students and to 32.4% for those who are profoundly deaf. An additional 15.2% of profoundly deaf students refuse to speak; this percentage drops to 5.3% for severely deaf students and to 2.9% for those with less than severe losses.

Q. *How are these students performing academically?*

A. The median achievement levels of hearing impaired students in reading comprehension and math computation, according to Stanford Achievement Test measurements, are shown in Figures 7 and 8. A hearing impaired student at age 14 is likely to be performing at a third grade level in reading comprehension and a sixth grade level in math computation.

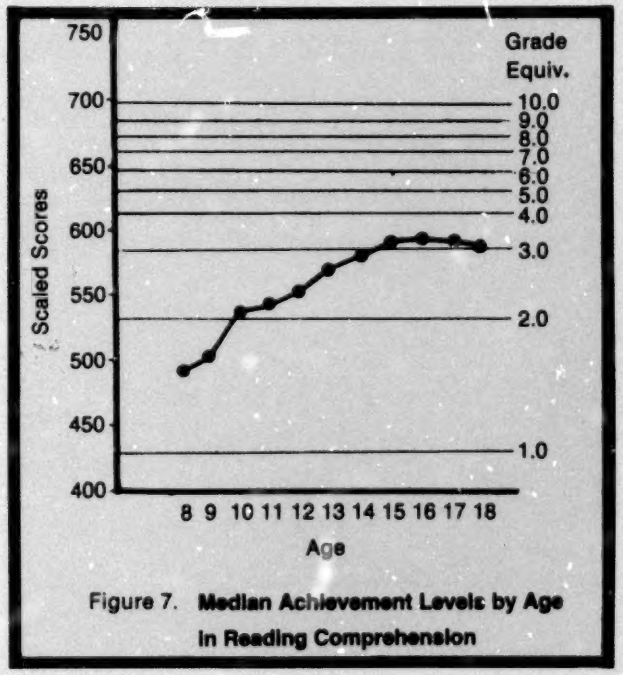

Figure 7. **Median Achievement Levels by Age in Reading Comprehension**

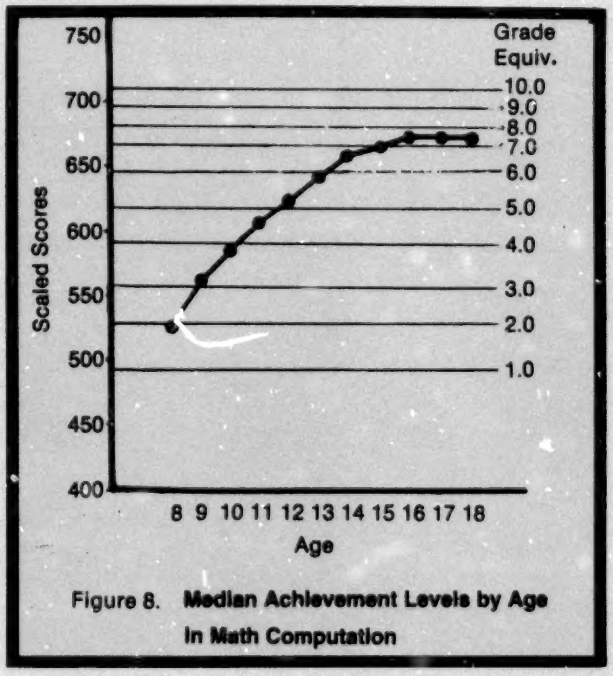

Figure 8. **Median Achievement Levels by Age in Math Computation**

Q. *Have enrollment levels in public residential schools changed in recent years?*

A. An analysis by region of enrollment in 60 public residential schools for deaf students from 1974 to 1984 is shown in Figure 9. Enrollment has declined steadily in all four sections of the U.S., but the decline in northeastern schools has been dramatic.

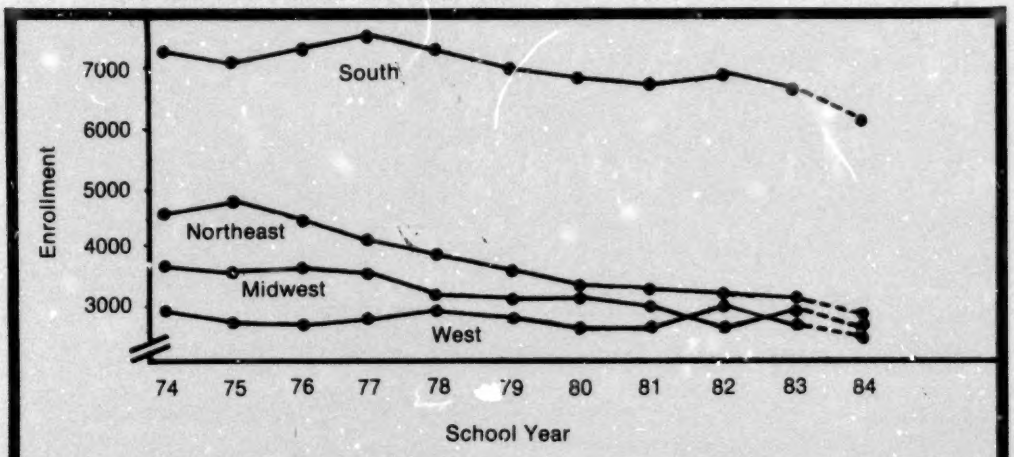

Figure 9. **Regional Enrollment in 60 Public Residential Schools for Deaf Students, 1974-1984**

Q. *Are many colleges currently offering special programs for hearing impaired students?*

A. Since 1960 the number of postsecondary programs for hearing impaired students has increased from one program (Gallaudet's) to 102 programs, as shown in Figure 10.

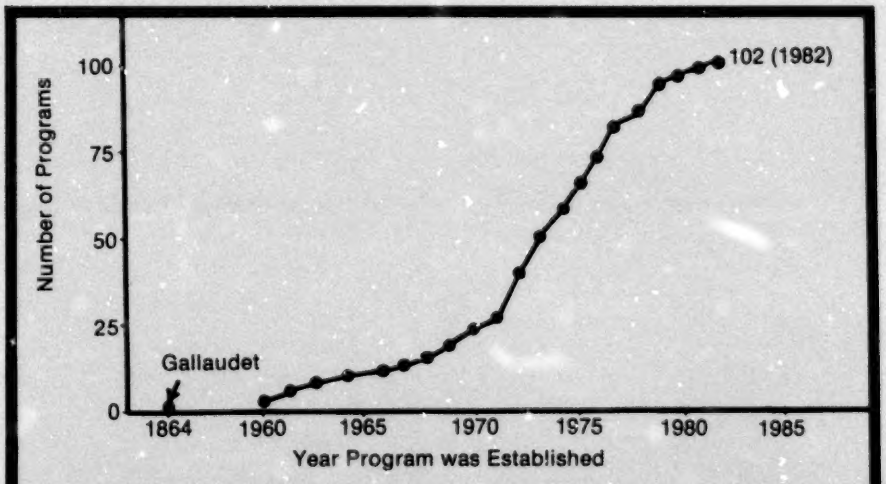

Figure 10. **Number of Postsecondary Programs for Hearing Impaired Students by Year of Establishment**

If you have questions concerning the information in this pull-out section, write to the Center for Assessment and Demographic Studies, Gallaudet Research Institute, 800 Florida Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.
Telephone 202-651-5300 (TDD 651-5302).